

Call for proposals for a one-year study circle

The Nordic Summer University (NSU) calls for project proposals for a one-year study circle (2023-2024). We seek proposals for new scholarly networks addressing the safe-guarding and organization of academic freedom.

Founded in 1950, NSU is an independent, non-profit scholarly institution that provides platforms for networks and collaborations across disciplines in the Nordic and Baltic regions. The activities of NSU are based on three concepts:

Research: NSU provides frameworks for critical scholarship with relevance for culture, science and society, where scholars and practitioners explore ideas and develop knowledge on equal footing.

Networking: NSU brings together university scholars, students, artists and other professionals from different disciplines, countries, generations and institutions in activities that transcend institutional hierarchies.

Folkbildning: NSU combines two traditions: the continental ideals of learning and cultivation of the self and the Nordic heritage of *folkbildning* and self-organization, with its investments in open access education and collaboration through participation and active citizenship. All aspects of NSU are democratically organized by the participants, including decisions on the NSU study program.

What is a study circle?

Activities in the NSU are based on thematic study circles, which are forums for participants to present, discuss, and develop their scholarship. The work done in a study circle aims to do new and innovative research in the Nordic and Baltic context and provides a surplus for the Nordic and/or Baltic region. Each study circle has two people who function as coordinators, who are responsible for organizing the circle's activities. Each circle meets twice during the year, once in the winter (January-April) in a so-called winter symposium in the Nordic-Baltic region, and once in the summer during the annual weeklong NSU summer session, which is typically held the last week of July. The winter symposia will be organized by the circle in collaboration with our local partner, Gothenburg university. The summer session is organized by NSU, together with other existing circles, in Denmark in summer 2024. The circles conduct parallel symposia during the day and partake in joint activities in the evening. For more information about current study circles, visit <http://nordic.university/study-circles/>

What can NSU offer?

NSU offers:

- a platform for collaboration;
- extended networks of people, their in-kind contributions in voluntary work and personal talent; and
- over 70 years of inherited practice and tradition around democratic, grassroots organisation and connections to various institutions and organisations across the Nordic- Baltic regions.

NSU is well-known in the Nordic countries and beyond, and as such offers a good network to attract researchers, scholars, students, artists and professionals to participate in your study circle. NSU will provide you, as circle coordinators, with access to and support from an established network with a long experience in organizing symposia, often with a highly experimental setup, and with a strong emphasis on democratic characteristics and values.

What is NSU looking for?

NSU is looking for a proposal of study circle that investigates the democratic practices that are necessary for the autonomous university to function as a public space of knowledge. The ideal of the autonomous university is defended everywhere, but democratic procedures are increasingly taken out of practice in decision-making in academia. The proposal could center on for example the organization and protection of academic freedom, different peer review practices, collective decision-making in research procedures or other topics relevant for the development and maintaining of the university as a public and democratic space for knowledge production. The winter symposia must be organized at Gothenburg university, Sweden (the contact will be provided by NSU).

Application requirements

NSU gives priority to interdisciplinary applications with an original approach and content, with interested participants from a minimum of three Nordic-Baltic countries, with a plan of the activities of the circle. NSU strives to support topics that are not already established in universities, as well as projects that cross the borders between disciplines and/or academia and society. Early career scholars are especially encouraged to apply.

The proposals for new study circles must include:

1. Aims and goals of the project, including a short outline of:

A. The scholarly context, central questions, and the methodological points of departure for the prospective study circle.

B. Considerations regarding impact and outcomes in the Nordic-Baltic context. Depending on the aims of the circle, the outcomes may vary, but possible outcomes include publications (both academic and directed at the general public), collaborations, and exhibitions.

2. Overview of the activities of the circle in winter and in summer, including a plan for collaborations, outcomes and topics to be treated.

3. List of people and institutions supporting the proposal, including:

A. The names and contact information of the two people who will function as the coordinators of the prospective circle.

B. A short list of prospective contributors (up to 5), including their names, present positions, nationalities and/or places of residence (at least three Nordic and Baltic countries should be represented) and a short description of outreach plan to engage new participants.

The length of the application covering the aims and the structure of the circle (1 and 2 above) must not exceed 2000 words.

The application shall be sent to board@nsuweb.org no later than September 30th.